

Raising your Foster Pups from Birth to Surgery



Foster homes are needed to provide nursing mothers a safe, warm environment in which they can raise their young. In this type of situation, foster volunteers closely monitor the progress of the litter, but for the first few weeks momma usually does most of the work. Foster homes also provide attention and socialization to the adult animal and the growing babies. Occasionally, puppies are orphaned and need to be bottle fed and hand-reared by humans.

This section is going to review the basic rearing information of pups from birth to 16 weeks.

Keep in mind, if your foster is between 0-16 weeks it should not be going outside for any reason whatsoever. All socializing and care should be done indoors. If you have any questions regarding this please contact your Foster Coordinator.

QUARANTINE

Puppies that have been brought to us from high disease risk areas of the country are placed into foster homes for socialization and medical observation for a minimum of two weeks. Please do not allow quarantine puppies to visit public areas during quarantine. They should not come into contact with other dogs, except the foster volunteer's own fully vaccinated dogs. There is a higher incidence of disease being spread to and from these immune-compromised animals.

Facilities needed:

An easy-to-clean area separated from your own companion animals, yet not isolated from normal activities. Examples are a bathroom, spare bedroom, heated laundry room or kitchen.

Infant Development and Socializing Puppies

A great amount of time and effort is required to properly socialize puppies between the ages of 4 to 12 weeks. Daily socialization sessions are important in shaping the foster puppy's future personality and emotional growth.



Neonates:

Neonatal puppies should be pink, firm, plump and generally healthy in appearance.

Respiration-Neonates breathe 25-35 times per minute. Their heart rate is greater than 200 beats per minute until they are 2 weeks old.

Temperature-Normal rectal temperature for newborns is 96 – 97 F.

Eyes and Ears-Closed, but can still hear (poorly) and respond to bright light with a blink reflex.

Muscles-Flexor muscles are stronger than the extensor muscles. Healthy puppies will curl their bodies and limbs inward.

At this time, mom and pups should be kept in a birthing pool still. Small blankets with no holes, or towels, should line the interior of the pool. Pups this age cannot regulate their body temperature, so please make sure the room is warm and comfortable for them.

Pups 1 to 2 weeks:

Pups should still be in the birthing pool with mom.

Temperature-Normal rectal temperature has gradually increased to 100 F.

Eyes and Ears-Open at approximately 11-15 days.

Muscles-Extensor muscles begin to develop. They can use their front legs to stand and walk shakily.

Neuromuscular-Withdrawal to pain stimuli is noticed.

What you can do -It is important that the area where the babies are kept is warm and smooth, so that the area around their umbilical cord does not become infected. You can do gentle handling and cuddling at this point. These sessions should be very short (1-2 minutes) and great care should be taken in the handling process.

- 1) Briefly, rock the baby back and forth.
- 2) Rub the coat briskly with your hands, and gently finger the webbing in between the toes. Rub ears and muzzle.
- 3) Invert the baby so it is facing the ceiling and gently rock back and forth, up and down.



2 to 3 weeks:

Vision-Poor even after the eyes open, but continues to develop until 3 to 4 weeks of age. If the eyes fail to open and the lids look sticky, the lids should be very gently wiped with dampened cotton and a little petroleum jelly smeared on them to ease their opening. **The eyelids should never be pulled apart.** If the eyes still haven't opened by 14 days contact your Foster Coordinator.

Muscles-The rear legs can now support the body. Puppies begin crawling.

Temperature-Able to maintain body temperature within the normal range (100.5 F-102.5 F).

Teeth-Deciduous incisors erupt at 3 weeks, followed by deciduous canines.

Sometimes around this age, you may notice the mother wants to be away a little bit more often. Monitor pups weight closely during this time.

You may be removing the pups from the pool at this point if they are able to escape.

What you can do-Be careful not to startle the puppy with sudden movements or loud sounds. Do not overwhelm the baby at this point. Place a human-scented T-shirt in the sleeping area every day. The den area should have 2 surfaces, one for sleeping and the

other for a toilet (away from the sleeping and feeding area.) Provide 5 minutes of handling exercises in order to stimulate, not to scare, the puppy.

- 1) Gently roll the infant over on its back for 10-15 seconds, and then draw the puppy close to you, stroking and cuddling it.
- 2) Softly pinch in between the toes and then draw the animal close to you, stroking and cuddling the puppy.
- 3) Grooming-Softly and gently brush the puppy's coat a few strokes, touch the ears and mouth and **clip nails**.



3 to 4 weeks:

Muscles—the extensor muscles become dominant. By 21 days, puppies can walk with a fairly steady gait. Puppies can sit and have reasonable control of toes.

Eyes and Ears-Vision and hearing normal. Blink response disappears, due to the development of accurate pupil control. The infant is now able to use visual clues to locate and approach the mother. Ears should be completely open by 17 days.

Respiration-Slows to 15-25 breaths per minute

Teeth-Deciduous incisors and canine teeth erupt.

What you can do- Do not permanently remove the infant animal from its mother or littermates at this time. It is critical to the puppy's development that it continues with its social interaction.

- 1) Be careful not to frighten puppy-it is experiencing a shower of sensory stimulation and a frightening experience could make a life-long impression.
- 2) It is important to provide a stable home environment to balance the excess stimulation the puppy is experiencing.
- 3) The puppies will start to investigate their immediate environment. Safe, simple toys can be added for them to discover at this time.
- 4) The babies can be introduced to people at this time, but this should be carefully controlled and limited to family members and close friends. The interaction should be limited to 5 minutes of gentle massage and time spent cuddling.
- 5) The main caretaker should continue grooming and handling exercises: holding, cuddling.



4 to 5 weeks:

Teeth-Deciduous premolars erupt

Muscular-Puppies are walking normally. Social play is prevalent.

Eyes and Ears-Guided paw-placing and obstacle avoidance develop between 3 to 5 weeks.

Vision is markedly improved.



5 to 8 weeks:

Teeth-Entire set of deciduous teeth by 5 weeks

Eyes-Eye color is determined by 6 weeks

Postural reactions-Fully developed at 6 to 8 weeks.

Adult sleep patterns-Developed by 7 to 8 weeks of age

Temperature-Normal range is 100.5 F to 102.5 F

Play-Play with objects and locomotor play rise markedly around 7 to 8 weeks of age

What you can do-The puppy is totally dependent on the environment you provide for stimulation and development.

- 1) Introduce the puppy to as many different people as possible-people of different shapes, sizes, colors, sexes and ages. Also introduce the puppy to other animals. Allow supervised visits for about five minutes. These visits should be calm and pleasant as a traumatic incident at this stage could have a long lasting effect.
- 2) Continue to add appropriate toys to the puppy's environment.
- 3) Expose the puppy to mild sounds.
- 4) Expose the puppy to different areas and surfaces, allowing it to investigate.
- 5) The main caregiver continues handling and grooming exercise.



8 weeks plus:

Teeth—Change from deciduous (milk) teeth to adult teeth starts at about 3 ½ months.

What you can do—Protect the puppy from things that could have a lasting effect during the fear period.

- 1) It is important to separate littermates by 10 weeks of age. This promotes bonding with people as their “family” and less dependency on other dogs for companionship.
- 2) Introductions to people are extremely important, as the puppy develops the ability to form permanent relationships with humans at this time. Supervise the visit, but expose the puppy to as many different types of people as possible.
- 3) The puppy’s environment should develop a sense of security in the animal.
- 4) There should be mild restrictions imposed on the puppy to help it better develop proper tolerance levels.
- 5) Introduce the puppy to new places, but remember that it is not fully immunized yet.
- 6) Introduce the puppy to a crate and begin to crate train. Puppies that are fostered without a mom can be crate trained earlier.
- 7) Introduce the puppy to the car. Spend time in the car with the animal without going anywhere. It can be in a crate/carrier or on the floor. Click and treat the puppy (if you are not familiar with this method of training, please talk with the Tails staff). Gradually drive a short distance, and then allow the puppy to leave the car.
- 8) Introduce the puppy to louder noises gradually, such as a vacuum cleaner, washing machine and/or dishwasher. Play with the puppy as you introduce the noise in the background.

Encourage puppies to explore, sniff, and lick these noisemakers. Exposing puppies to a variety of unusual sounds helps them become accustomed to these noises. It will also minimize fearful, nervous reactions to noises later in life.

9) Introduce restraining exercises.

- Gently roll the puppy on its side and hold your hand on its shoulder and hindquarters, gently restraining it. Ignore any squirming or struggling. When the puppy has relaxed for 10 seconds, click and treat and allow it to get up.
- Elevation-gently pick the puppy up from underneath the chest and raise its front feet off the ground; back feet should remain on the ground. Ignore any squirming or struggling. When the puppy has relaxed for 10 seconds, click and treat and allow it to get down.
- Gently roll the puppy over on its back in between your legs with its head closest to you. Ignore squirming or struggling. When the puppy has relaxed for 5 seconds, click and treat and allow it to get up.
- Gradually increase the time the puppy accepts being restrained, praising, petting and massaging it.
- Introduce retrieving games, hide and seek.
- Combine simple play with restraint exercises. This familiarizes puppies to having their paws touched (front and back), mouths opened, muzzles touched, and ears touched. Combining this with regular grooming sessions and body massages help prevents skin sensitivity or aversion to touch.



Pre-Adolescent - 13-16 weeks:

General behavior-Puppy is fully developed, needing only experience. The puppy's mind can still be influenced. The animal's flight instinct is developing and may cause it to run from real or imagined threats.

What you can do—Be consistent with rules, continue grooming and socialization. Continue dog's formal training using the 'click and treat' method.

Surgery!

If your pups were born in your home, or have been there since they were 6 weeks or younger, they should be coming in for surgery when they reach 8 weeks of age. Surgery is usually scheduled about a week ahead of time. You'll be notified of the day and time. You are responsible for getting your foster to Tails for this. If you are dropping off the day of surgery, you will need to make sure that your foster has **no access to food after 10pm the day prior to surgery.**

If you received your pups into your care after they were 6 weeks of age, you will have them with you for **a minimum of 2 weeks** while they complete their quarantine period.

Weaning and Feeding Puppies

Generally, it is best to start weaning puppies at 3 to 5 weeks of age. Weaning time depends upon the size of the litter, the condition of the mother, and the availability of mother's milk. Weaning should be a gradual process.

How to Wean:

Begin introducing 3 to 5 week-old puppies to semi-solid "gruel", made from 1-part canned food to 3 parts hot water. You can also soak dry kibble in warm water to make it palatable for gruel puppies. Make sure to serve the food at body temperature, (98 to 100 F). Offer this mixture 3 to 4 times daily depending on the age of the puppy. Remove any uneaten gruel after about 15 minutes and discard.

Mash the moistened food well with a fork, or puree the mixture in a blender. Place the thick gruel in a shallow pan, (pie tins work well). Feeding puppies in the bathtub helps ease the clean-up process when weaning puppies off the bottle.

Introducing Food:

The mother dog will usually show her puppies how to eat gruel and solid foods, and drink water. Feed the mother dog before offering gruel to her babies or she will eat it all.

Dip your finger into the gruel and let the puppy lick at it, or smear a small amount on the puppy's lips or on the roof of his mouth. Be careful not to get any of the gruel in the puppy's nose.

At around 5 weeks of age, the young puppies should be reducing their intake of mother's milk and consuming more gruel. Once they are consistently eating gruel, gradually decrease the amount of water used. All changes in amounts and consistency of food should be done gradually to promote proper digestion.

Always provide plenty of fresh water in clean bowls.

Some puppies take longer to acclimate to supplemental feedings. It is important to always watch the litter to ensure that each individual is eating healthy amounts of food. Check tummies for fullness after they have eaten.

4-6 weeks-Gruel 3 times a day.

6-8 weeks– Mix canned food and moistened dry food to begin their transition to dry food. Feed this mixture twice a day.

Mastitis:

Mastitis is inflammation involving one or more of the mother dog's mammary glands (teats). Mastitis usually presents 6 weeks after giving birth, if it is going to present at all. **If you suspect Mastitis contact your Foster Coordinator.**

Symptoms of mastitis include fever, listlessness, loss of appetite, and neglect of the young. Affected mammary glands are usually swollen, hot and painful to the touch. You can feel firm nodules within the tissue of the teat.

The cause can be from a bacterial infection in the mammary gland and may require antibiotic treatment. If the dog will tolerate it, hot-packing the affected glands will encourage drainage.